

Psychosocial support for the teams involved in response to the Coronavirus event in Israel

Recommendations for Team leader

The caregivers are exposed to many situations in which they experience emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological reactions that make daily functioning difficult and cause difficulties and stress.

A very significant factor that causes a lot of stress is the fear of the staff member's contagion and that of the surrounding environment (relatives, circle of friends, co-workers, fellow students, etc.).

The family and the immediate social circle may also add to this pressure due to concern for the safety of their loved ones - who may be exposed to the Corona virus.

To deal with the many stresses and strains, two time points need to be focused upon:

- Before - mental preparation for working hours in the environment of those who are sick and isolated (shift entry).
- After - end of the shift and processing of the experience, in order to continue the daily routine, which is tense among the general public as well.

Preparation

1. **Knowledge reduces anxiety.** Every staff member should be given orderly information to maintain cognitive continuity. Before the beginning of a shift, the team will receive an **orderly briefing** that includes information on the current situation, updated guidelines and emphasis regarding self-protection.
2. During the brief and during the entire shift, it is recommended to reinforce the **significance of the role and the contribution of the work to the public** and family, in order to strengthen motivation. The heavy burden and the difficulties of working with PPE must be addressed, the successes need to be highlighted and the gaps must not be ignored.
3. Focus on what "there is" rather than on what's missing. Adopting a **positive and optimistic approach**: It is important to emphasize to the team the extensive set of actions taken by Israel Government and other countries to cope with this event and how meaningful is the role of the team as part of in this effort, that there is something that can be done even though we don't have all the knowledge and that we currently have to deal with this crisis with tools available to us at this moment (experimental drugs, development of a vaccine, quarantine, isolation, etc.).
4. Strengthen **self-efficacy**: help the team members to identify self-coping powers and external sources of support, strengthen their belief and confidence in their skills and ability to deal with difficulties.

5. Build a work routine that allows the staff to feel that they are in the **safest place** - PPE upon beginning a shift, keeping the protocol of medical tests, clothing, disinfection, cleaning etc. This is in keeping balance with the **individual needs** of the team members - scheduled breaks, food and drink, communication with family and close friends, communication with other team members etc.

End of shift

The above recommendations should also be applied at the end of a shift. In addition, a number of aspects should be considered when ending a shift and upon return to the family:

1. Give room and legitimacy to emotional expression. It is important to have a ventilation discussion at the end of the shift: a 3-step meeting within hours of an event, which aims to assess the participant's mental state, sort and mitigate symptoms if necessary.

Conversation steps:

- A. Facts (what happened) and your role in it
 - B. Normalization - 'This is a normal reaction to a difficult and unconventional event'
 - C. Attention to follow-up (recommended with an psycho-social professional) - what symptoms are expected later, should development and/or relief be expected, self-acceptance, patience and tolerance, and finally - providing information (who can help, recommendations and guidelines).
2. Make sure to engage in "battery charging" activities at the end of the shift (according to the natural tendency). Examples: sports, music, prayer, meditation, emotional sharing, etc.
 3. Make sure staff members talk openly with their family members about the risks associated with working in the Corona virus environment. Relate to them that you take the strictest safety measures and receive the best protection available - and ask them to share with their family the important task ahead of you.

In all stages of the event

Whether the employee is working or at home, it is important to pay attention to responses that indicate stress and anxiety, or to new, unfamiliar responses. If familiar symptoms persist and do not weaken or new ones appear - professionals should be involved as above.

Despite the importance and willingness of some of the team to talk about the subject – it is not mandatory. If someone does not want to talk, this is also an appropriate way of dealing.

Recommendations for team member

Focus on what "there is" rather than what's missing. Adopt a positive and optimistic approach. There is something to do, even though we do not know everything and we currently have to deal with the difficulties with the tools at our disposal.

Knowledge reduces anxiety. Ask and learn about the current updated situation, guidelines and emphasis regarding self-protection.

Give room and legitimacy to emotional expression. Feelings of stress and anxiety are normal reactions in an emergency and might be expressed. Everyone responds in his or her own way - and every response is legitimate in an emergency.

Routine produces confidence. Maintain life and work routines as much as possible - maintaining a daily agenda and regular habits builds certainty and a sense of security.

Identify the forces around you. The circles in your life are many. Your team members share similar experiences, so be open to talking with them - where you will find that you are not alone, and many share your experiences and feelings. Share with each other, and learn what helps others.

Stick to the roles of your life. The roles in our lives are many - parents, employees, managers and more. Stick to these roles and try to maintain balance in your life even during this time, when the burden is high.

Know yourself. Identify what helped you get through periods of uncertainty in the past, and consciously use the same paths. Adopt relaxation techniques that are suitable for you (there are various methods with the help of body, breathing, music and so on, training videos can be used).

Make time for yourself! It is advisable to intentionally initiate activities that bring you pleasure and well-being such as sports, reading, music, hobbies, crafts, cooking, family, social and religious gatherings and more.

Take care of yourself! Pay attention to your body, behavior, and feelings. Pay attention to reactions that indicate stress and anxiety, or new ones that are unfamiliar. If familiar symptoms persist and do not weaken or new ones appear - professionals should be involved.

Initiative and leadership create security. Get involved, offer solutions and ways of improvement, new initiatives that promote the team and patient care instill confidence in others and strengthen the sense of control and ability, and others will learn from you and follow your lead.

Talk openly with your family about the risks associated with working in the Corona virus environment. Relate to them that you take the best safety measures and receive the best protection available - and share them with the important task ahead of you.